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# THE BOOK OF SAINT ULTÁN



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THE BOOK OF SAINT ULTAN



# The Book of Saint Ultan

A COLLECTION OF PICTURES  
AND POEMS BY IRISH  
ARTISTS AND WRITERS



PUBLISHED BY THE CANDLE PRESS, AND SOLD  
FOR THE BENEFIT OF SAINT ULTAN'S HOSPITAL  
BY MARTIN LESTER, LTD., 78 Harcourt St., DUBLIN

¶ This book has been compiled and arranged  
by Katherine MacCormack ; designed  
by, and printed under the direction  
of, Colm O'Lochlainn, M.A.

at cliaċ :: :: lā fēile ultuim 1920



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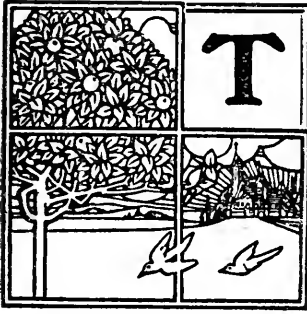




Fig.

*From an oil painting by A.E.*

## INTRODUCTION



HERE is no sight in Dublin more touching than the Hospital for Babies. Here again women, admitted to the great profession of Medicine, have been pioneers in a work of mercy and of science.

¶ The hospital was bravely founded a year ago under great difficulties by women whom no discouragement could daunt—not even the distraction of interests that beset the public, nor the money problems which the war has left behind it. Nine babies under a year old lie in the two wards now open, and there might be thirty infants and more, if the public knew of the need and their hearts were stirred to give help.

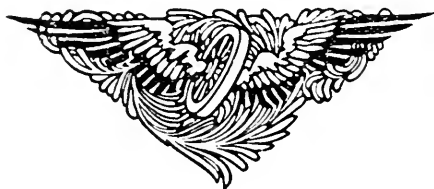
¶ All the women doctors in Dublin have given their time and their services with their well-known generosity. Each of them has her own dispensary day when the mothers come with their infants for advice. There they can learn to treat those children whose cases are not too dangerous to be cared for at home, and whose treatment is not too complicated for a working house. When a baby's life can only be preserved by the most skilled care and attendance it is taken into Saint Ultan's Hospital. There every latest resource of science is used to give it a chance of life and health. It is not that love and devotion are lacking in Dublin homes, but that the mere necessities of special food and skilled nursing are not there. How would even the wealthy fare if they had no refuge in time of grievous sickness? So also are babies brought to the Hospital by parents who would willingly lavish all care on them, but whose untrained care with no skilled help must fail.

¶ In the Hospital the order and skill are admirable. There are goats in the garden. In the milk-room you can see every baby's bottle, and the varieties of food prepared, too complicated to be made in the homes of the poor, which are needed in every case to cure the child of its trouble. The charts over each cot tell their amazing tale of the fierce changes that mark the day and night of

that frail body as the flame of life leaps up and then dies away almost into darkness. You will hear of "the work that has to be put into it" to add two pounds to a baby's body. The hospital is in fact a scientific centre of research and experiment that must inevitably have its effect on all the growing families of the land, and will in due time have power to bring consolation to many a family, rich and poor, by teaching how life can be saved. It is in fact an experiment which concerns us all—this laboratory for the protection of infant life.

¶ But no visitor would think of it as a laboratory, bright and clean and spotless and ordered as it is. The wards are the very homes of the infants. There are three nurses in the day, and two at night—and these are the very mothers of the babies. Even in these tiny fragments of humanity you can see by the smiles and nods and becks what joy the approach of the nurse brings. Individuality is already marked, and each baby is played with and talked to, and nursed by the fire as it would be in a careful home. On sunny days the cots are carried into the garden, and I am told the infants have a joy in the singing of birds like that of the Irish saints of old. No mother would fear to send her baby into such surroundings, where the first dawning of the mind is cared for as much as the first health of the body. I would ask all doubters and all believers to visit this little hospital—this new Cradle of the Irish infants, where they may be made more fit to follow the will of God—in toil or sorrow, or by His mercy in joy.

¶ The organisers and friends of the Infant Hospital offer their sincere thanks to those who by their contributions have made up this Book of Saint Ultan. It is significant, and of good augury, that those whose work has set a distinguishing mark on the intellectual life of Ireland, have here shewn their sympathy and active help in its human pains by bringing their gifts to the Infants.



# SAINT ULTAN OF ARDBRACCAN



**I**T was a happy thought of the founders of the new infant hospital to place it under the protection of the kindly Irish saint who just thirteen centuries ago devoted his life to the service of little Irish babies. Saint Ultan was a disciple and kinsman of Saint Declan, and both were of the Clan Dal Conchubar, a branch of the Desi of Meath. Saint Ultan was made Bishop of Ardbracon by Declan, who had charge of the diocese, about the middle of the seventh century. Just at that time a terrible epidemic called the Buidhe Chonaill (or yellow plague), broke out not alone in Ireland, but also in England, Scotland, and many European countries. It caused great suffering, and carried off very many people, leaving numbers of helpless little children unprovided for. Ultan's generous tender heart was sorely troubled by the plight of the numerous little orphans the terrible sickness had made in his own country, and he gathered into the shelter of his monastery all of these he could find, and at one time he had no less than a hundred-and-fifty of them together beneath its roof.

**U** Besides having a kindly, gentle disposition he seems also to have had an original and inventive mind, for he solved the problem of feeding his numerous helpless—and it must be admitted rather troublesome—little guests, by inventing a feeding bottle for their use. The annalist tells us that he “procured a number of cows’ teats, which he filled with milk, and put into the babies’ mouths with his own hands.” It was a quaint and primitive notion, but it served its purpose. It is probably the first mentioned feeding bottle on record, and it may be that from it was evolved the modern article. In an interesting footnote in his “Social History” Doctor Joyce says that, up to the time when he was writing that fine book, the peasants of Russia fed their babies by “fastening teats, filled with milk, to cow’s horns, which they placed in the mouths of the children.”

¶ Once, whilst Saint Declan was himself in charge of Ardraccan, a fleet of Gentiles appeared on the coast with the evident intention of plundering the monastery. The brethren ran to Saint Declan, who ordered his disciple Ultan to make the Sign of the Cross in the direction of the ships. This he did with his left hand, his right being otherwise engaged at the moment. "Immediately all the ships sank like lead into the sea, and the sailors who attempted to swim ashore were turned into rocks." Hence the old Irish saying, "May Ultan's left hand be against it," and there is a belief that had he used his right hand no foreign fleet would have ever been able to land in Ireland. This belief is referred to in an ancient poem cited in the Calendar of Aengus the Culdee. He is also spoken of in the Feilire as "the great sinless prince in whom the little ones are flourishing: the children play greatly round Ultan of Ardraccan." He is spoken of in most of the Annals, and in O'Hanlon's Lives of the Saints there is mention of Saint Ultan no fewer than twenty-one times, but whether it is the one man, or others called after him, even the author himself does not seem certain; so that it is hard to know exactly what date to claim as his feast day, but that generally accepted is September the fourth.

C. M. Ni. D.





# AN CRAOIBHIN

## CADMEAD.

Oc! ocón mar atá mé,  
    Naé cruaidé cruaidé mo éar!  
Oc ocón mar atá mé,  
    'S mé as ciaspáil leir an mbár!  
Oc ocón, mar ní beó mé,  
    Ní beó mé áct ní'l mé marb,  
Ní feicfidé mo mhuintear go deó mé,  
    Mar bí mé, ar mhuir nó ar talam.

Do dhearbhad na céarta daoine  
    Ar o'eadan geanaíthail ráin,  
Ní éireofuoir ir ní fadóifúir  
    Go raib fuil ar bit ar do láin,  
Do dhearbhad na céarta daoine  
    Ar lonnrad do d'á fúl bréas  
Ní éireofuoir ir ní fadóifúir  
    Go nveairnair mo marbad, tréat.

A Nóra ní mé an céad-pear  
    A o'fásair i mbéal an báir  
Cá mbéiré maiteammar le fásail asao  
    Lá an bhráda ó Dia na ngráir,  
Ó o'fás tú mire san fóirighin  
    Ar leabaid an bhróin 'mo luíde,  
San bhráon áct uirge im' g'éasaid  
    O éarraigis tú fuil mo éiríde.

Éir le mo cómhairle a Nóra  
    Ní mór duit imteáct riar  
Asur fear do glúin inran féiréal  
    Go nveanair tú fadóiríon fíor,  
Asur bí as caiteam do fadóirí  
    Sul a dteiré tú féin ran gcré  
Mar buó éoir duit é do caiteam,  
    — As iarraid párvúin Dé.



*St. Ultan. From a poster by Lily Williams.*

SUSAN L. MITCHELL

## THE ADVENTURE

I weary looking back where happy hours  
Built in my heart bright booths along the way,  
My spirit falters, robbed of half its powers.  
Since all my morrows tell of yesterday.

I climb no hills, the valley calls me now,  
And all my sky moves surely to the west.  
I weep the brightness ebbing from the brow,  
The proud heart grown so timid in the breast.

They bid me rest, praising the folded wing.  
Faint heart, thy great adventure's but begun.  
Immortal hours wait thy wild questioning  
When night shall hold and fold thy setting sun.

# NANCY CAMPBELL

## THREE BABY-POEMS

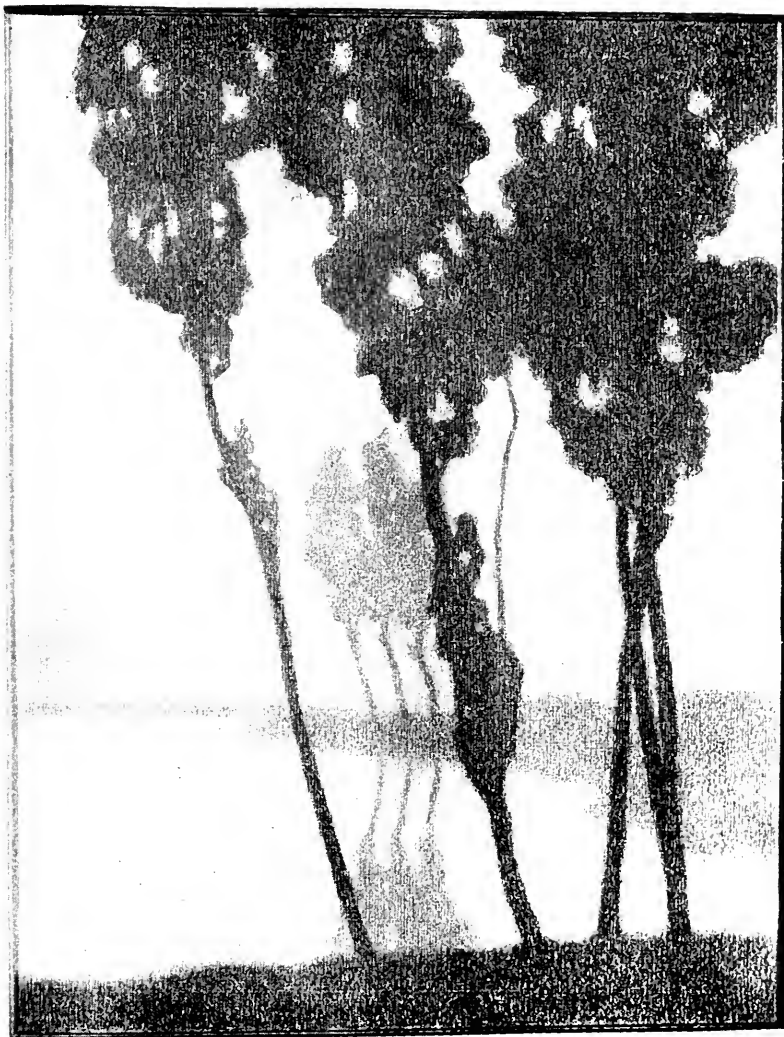
### I. HAPPY THE HOUSE

Happy the house  
That goes a-tiptoe when the evening comes,  
And says, "Hush! hush!—he sleeps!"  
Happy the house that may not lie too long  
Of mornings ;  
Little cries of laughter or of hunger  
Wakening it ; tiny imperious fingers  
Pushing up its eyes.  
Happy the house—its heart is beating to  
                    the heart of Earth,  
The sap of Earth is running in its veins.

### II. INNOCENT SLEEP

My little son half woke last night,  
A golden-headed rosiness,  
Dark-eyed with drowsiness——  
Peered for a moment at the candle-light.

So I have seen the daisies sleep,  
Pink-tipped, along a mountain wall,  
And hardly stir at all  
At the bright dawn—their dreams  
                    had been so deep.



*Le Lac.*

*From a charcoal drawing by Paul Henry.*



### III. THE BABY AND THE LEAVES

#### *THE BABY*

—My mother bade me sleep beneath your shade.  
If you will sing to me I will not be afraid,  
And call for her. She told me nothing harms  
Good babies. I can wave my arms  
As well as you—I do it when I'm glad.  
You must be always happy. When I'm sad  
I can roar louder than the wind!

You're not as old as me :

I used to look up into a bare tree,  
And some of you are still crimped up in buds  
as pink  
As my two hands. If you would sing I'd go  
to sleep, I think.

#### *THE LEAVES*

—Little brothers, let us sing  
To that round and rosy thing.  
Hushaby, hushaby,  
Human baby, do not cry.  
Listen to us, we will tell  
How the kind Earth loves you well,  
How the Sun will make you grow,  
How the great Winds when they blow  
Call for you to run with them.  
Every flower upon its stem,  
Every silver star that peeps—  
Hush my brothers, see he sleeps!

SEUMAS O'SULLIVAN

P R A I S E

As Mary's Son, with quiet feet  
Walked with his friends, through the gold wheat  
A bird rose from the sod,  
And hung above them, in full lay,  
Singing His praise, 'till He and they  
Had passed by further fields away.  
*For whosoever singeth his song  
Out of a full heart glad and strong  
Sings to the praise of God.*





*By Bowmore Strand.*

*From a drawing by Jack B. Yeats.*





A CAROL

[*XIV Century*]

I sing of a maiden  
That is makeles;  
King of all kings  
To her son she ches.

He came al so still  
To his mother's bour,  
As dew in April  
That falleth on the flour.

He came al so still  
There his mother was,  
As dew in April  
That falleth on the grass.

He came al so still  
There his mother lay  
As dew in April  
That falleth on the spray.

Mother and maiden  
Was never none but she;  
Well may such a lady  
Godde's mother be.

S A T U R N

I see the star, Aldebaran,  
Slowly lift a jewelled can  
To dying Helios ; bright in air,  
The gold of Berenice's hair ;  
And, swung dimly thro' the trees,  
Seven-lanterned Pleiades.  
Pale as ivory, overhead  
Cassiopeia takes to bed  
A blacker king than Cepheus,  
Father of the negroes' house.  
Boötes halts his breathing team  
To water in the blue star-stream,  
Where Cygnus swims, a bird of light,  
Between the clouded banks of night,  
And strong Orion languishes,  
Hurt with the reeds of Artemis.  
Red Antares' burning mouth  
Makes a rose of the white south ;  
Lyra tunes her cithara ;  
And from a graven amphora,  
A sweet-cruled Hyblæan jar,  
Sirius, the honey-star,  
Scatters the magic midnight dew  
On bugloss and bramble-blow.

Every single star I see  
In the vault's immensity  
But lean-ribbed Saturn, dark and proud.  
Shunner of the heavenly crowd,  
Why shunnest thou the child that Earth  
Bore to thee with troubled birth?  
Thinkest thou not that my dream-eyes  
Can pierce the armour of the skies——  
Lay bare thy triple-cinctured rings,  
Yellower than the torques of kings,  
Thy satellites, Enceladus  
And Mimas, and the overplus  
Of fiery motes that leap and roll  
About thy solitary soul?

I am thy child by Earth, thy wife,  
And share thy moods and live thy life,  
Lean-ribbed Saturn, dark and proud,  
Shunner of the heavenly crowd!

(With acknowledgments to *The Nation*).

F I O N N U A L A

Among the reeds round waters blue  
White wings are spread :  
And she is seen, who should have been  
For centuries dead :  
She, who ice-pierced in perilous coasts  
To land and sky  
Lifted the swan-song of her grief  
Yet could not die.

Enchantment fell and powerful spell  
Of demon hate,  
Had robbed her of her maiden robes,  
Her royal state.  
And she, 'mid halls of kindred kind  
Might walk no more,  
But floated far a phantom pale  
From shore to shore.

And yet the spell of demons fell  
Through ages long  
Touched not the everlasting soul  
The power of song,  
And they who mourn her bleeding breast  
And broken wing  
Shall see her rise in beauty yet  
The child of the King.



*Little Brigid.*

*From an oil painting by Grace Henry.*





NELL BYRNE

HUSH, WORLD

Hush, world, these April evenings, and hear  
A sweet philosopher discourse !  
Plain to the spirit's ear  
The blackbird's meaning ; but a sad divorce  
Between thought and imagination is—  
So ample Truth we miss.

Nearer to me than my soul's secret seems  
The mystic content of his song.  
Startled amid its dreams,  
My heart leaps towards hope—and learns to long  
For youth's unreasoning hours, when we  
Had that philosophy  
The coarse mind cannot capture to express,  
Nor the imprisoned spirit keep  
Long, in the days' duress.  
Far, fragrant memories thro' happy sleep  
May stir : vast fragments—the stiff mind, tho' bold,  
Too shallow is to hold.

Four simple notes : some gay and tender “ Why ? ”  
Then—sudden eloquence ! A twist  
Of sweet philosophy  
Strange, inextricable . . . My soul has kissed  
Truth deeply, now—and low vibrates in me  
Far, unto Memory.

THOMAS BODKIN

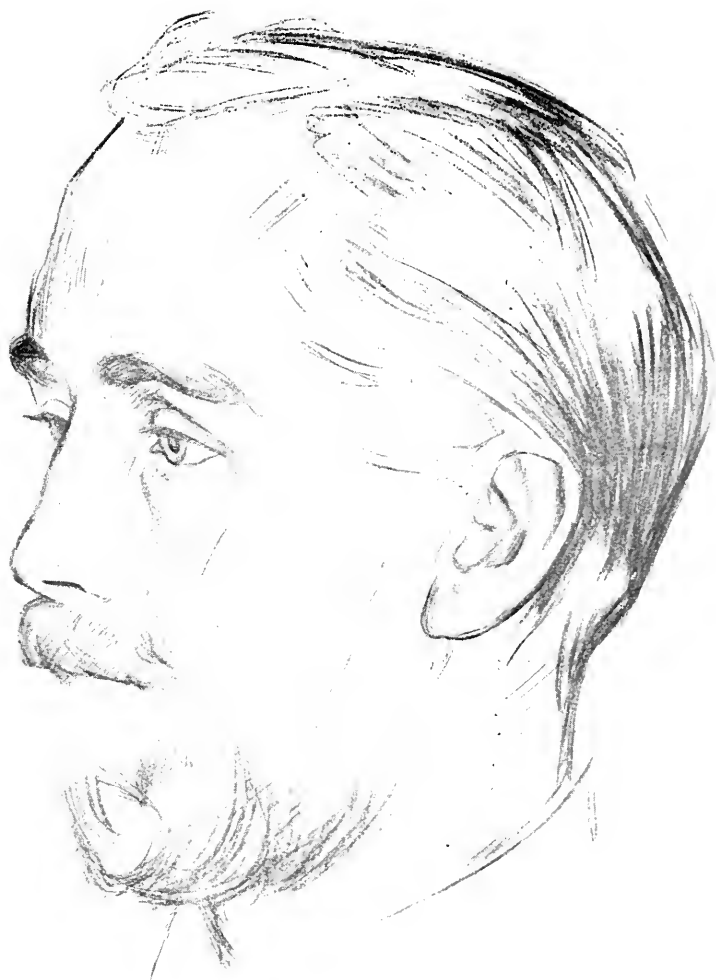
A VARIATION UPON A THEME BY MONSIEUR  
HENRY SPIESS

I'd written what seemed poetry to me :  
A critic said—there was some sense in him—  
That I aped Yeats, James Stephens, or Æ  
According to the season, or my whim.

He said : “You know your job, without a doubt.  
You have the handy knack of it. That's true.  
But if you cut the borrowed matter out  
What do you think there would be left to you?”

So, by my lonesome, on a winter's day,  
I sat me down to read the wretched book.  
Lifting as 't were a dead man's shroud away  
I turned each page—and chuckled till I shook.

I'd thought to read my laughter and my tears,  
All that rejoices me and all that grieves,  
My loves, my hopes, my hatreds and my fears :  
—and found the thing a bundle of blank leaves !



*Portrait Study.*

*From a pencil sketch by Patrick Tuohy.*





*In Hardwicke Street. From a drawing by Evelyn Gleeson*

A SONG

I mind me one day  
How my heart and I  
We rode the long way.  
Where the green hills lie  
In the gay spring-time ;

And by Dodder side  
With the lake as goal  
How we used to ride  
Up to Glenasmoil  
In the summer time ;

We left Kilmasheogue  
For Rathfarnham town  
When in Templeogue  
Leaves were red and brown  
In the autumn time ;

But the air's like wine  
And 'tis best to be  
Where the snow blows fine  
Down from Killakee  
In the winter time.



*Gossips.*

*From an etching by Mary Duncan.*







*From a drawing by Anna Griffin.*



## **A MIRACLE**

It was but yesterday I thought :  
How can it be that Winter lingers yet ?  
When will the grace be given us to forget  
The prison-house, from which we long have sought  
Deliverance, 'mid the darkness and the cold ?  
And now—To-day !—The Miracle is wrought !—  
Spring's a day old !—  
Forthwith, ye winds, out on your journeys set,  
That to the World this joy be quickly told.



## **ONE EVENING**

One evening as I read, a light  
Of gold, filled suddenly the room,  
I looked without ; against the gloom  
Of heavy clouds, the sky grew bright.

And then were blazoned, flaming high,  
Banners of changing cloud and fire,  
Then I beheld, o'er roof and spire,  
God's wonder writ across the sky.



W. Mac Bride



*A Georgian Doorway.*

*From an etching by Estella F. Solomons.*



MARGARET LYSTER

AUTUMN LEAVES

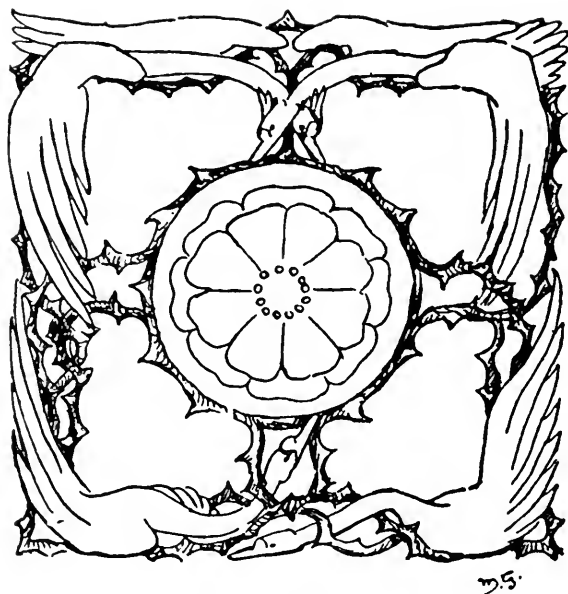
Yellow leaves straying  
Soft through the wind  
Leaving brown branches  
Swaying behind.

Berries of scarlet  
Over the stream,  
Shadow and sunlight  
Darken and gleam.

Through corn gathered up  
In deep meadow-sweet  
My love wanders down  
Red leaves at his feet.

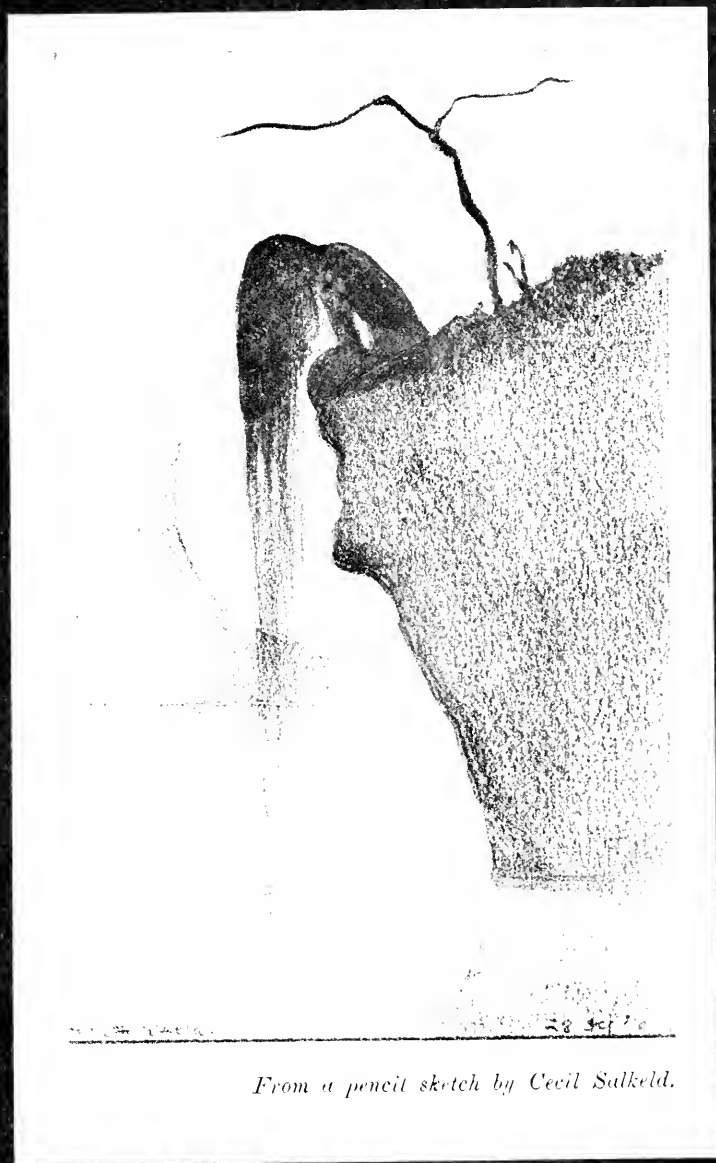
Yellow leaves straying  
Soft through the wind—  
Has he left sorrow  
Softly behind?

Strange-coloured leaves  
Hurriedly move  
And my love wanders down  
With his fair new love.



*Decoration by Maud Gonne.*





*From a pencil sketch by Cecil Salkeld.*





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